

WSAC Legislative Forums were recently held in four regions. The following is a summary of the forum I attended.

The WSAC Legislative Forums is a new effort to get more input on legislative issues. The WSAC Legislative Steering Committee is made up of 43 members with consideration for geographic distribution and political affiliation. The forum discussed a proposal to create Issue Teams comprised of two steering committee members that would seek additional input from all members through meetings with strong use of conference calls and e-mail. These Issue Teams are much like the existing Transportation Subcommittee, which I attended last year. Attached is a handout on the WSAC Issue Team. It will be important to see how the teams develop and how they define their issues so we can supply input early on.

The attached paper, WSAC Legislative Priorities for 2005, was also distributed. I was happy to see many of our issues such as government liability, transportation funding, streamline Growth Management Act, and water resource management included.

The forum format included presentations/comments with open discussion. One of the questions was whether engineers could prepare a list of priorities. I mentioned that this would be difficult, but may be there could be a modification to a Transportation Needs Assessment conducted for the Legislature about ten years ago. The problem with transportation is that there is not a common system of needs, and most of the comparisons involve different items. I did put in our suggestion for more staff support to help review transportation issues and support the legislative lobbying efforts.

There was also a general discussion of Law and Justice, Health, and Finance/Administration, and quite a bit of discussion of Growth Management (GMA), stormwater, liability, transportation, and contracting. There seemed to be support for transportation funding and the decline in gas tax to counties plus all of the related and increasing liabilities and regulations. It seems like there is great frustration with GMA and having to update and virtually recreate GMA policies periodically. People are also tired of the apparently large differences and rules governing GMA policies. It seems like this may be a big issue for next year and will impact engineers due to capital facility plans, transportation level of service and concurrency, critical area plans/policies, etc. Participants were also interested in limiting county civil liability. This will be a hard sell due to the strong lobbying against change by private lawyers. Hood Canal water quality was discussed. I believe we will hear more of this and the topic may be expanded to all water quality. There was also discussion on design/build contracts particularly for building facilities.

I left with the feeling of support on issues brought forward by the WSACE. We have our work cut out on modifying or drafting new legislation such as:

- Personal accountability for not wearing seatbelts.
- Eliminating or revising motorcycle sign requirements.
- Modifying Transportation Benefit District as per recent legislation.
- Increase in Day Labor law limits.

- Consideration of design/build contracts
- Continued support for new funding and review of gas tax status.

Now is the time to be proactive on possible legislative issues. So let's add/modify the above list and get drafts to WSAC well before their legislative conference!